

road and gaze once more upon the welcoming lights of home.

Let this be one of our constant thoughts and resolves, to live nearer in spirit and desire to heaven, to seek out something that shall be a window for us into that loving, brooding sky of our Father's. Some of us do not need to seek for windows in heaven. There are so many associations that draw our hearts and our thoughts thither. Dear ones perhaps have gone before us, and are looking backward toward us as we look forward toward them. The window of heaven is full of wistful faces and beckoning hands for some of us. Will it seem a strange journey or a far country when we go to our dear ones in heaven? Ah, the longer we live the more there is to draw us heavenward. The nearer we approach to life's port of departure, the more beautiful grows "that immortal sea which brought us hither." The way to rob death of every possible sting, is to live so near in spirit and in truth to God and God's home that the summons to come back to him and to our loved ones will seem like a king's recall of the last pardoned exile from a far country.

Your Own Cross the Best

J. R. Miller.

There is a poem called "The Changed Cross." It represents a weary one who thought that her cross was surely heavier than those of others whom she saw about her, and wished that she might choose another instead of her own. She slept, and in her dream she was led to a place where many crosses lay, crosses of divers shapes and sizes. There was a little one most beautiful to behold, set in jewels and gold. "Ah, this I can wear with comfort," she said. So she took it up, but her weak form shook beneath it. The jewels and the gold were beautiful, but they were far too heavy for her. Next she saw a lovely cross with fair flowers entwined around its sculptured form. Surely that was the one for her. She lifted it but beneath the flowers were piercing thorns which tore her flesh. At last, as she went on, she came to a plain cross, without jewels, without carving, with only a few words of love inscribed upon it. This she took up and it proved the best of all, the easiest to be borne. And as she looked upon it, bathed in the radiance that fell from heaven, she recognized her own old cross. She had found it again and it was the best of all and lightest for her.

God knows best what cross we need to bear. We do not know how heavy other people's crosses are. We envy some one who is rich; his is a golden cross set with jewels. But we do not know how heavy it is. Here is another whose life seems very lovely. She bears a cross twined with flowers. But we do not know what sharp thorns are hidden beneath the flowers. If we could try all the other crosses that we think lighter than ours, we should at last find that not one of them suited us so well as our own.

The Sunday School

LESSON 12—SEPTEMBER 16, 1900

The Rich Fool—Luke 12:13-23

Golden Text—What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?—Mark 8:36.

Lesson Thought.—The great question of human life is not what we have but what we are.

Time.—Immediately following the last lesson.

Place.—Probably in Perea, beyond Jordan.

Persons.—Jesus, about 33 years old.

Home Readings

See Harmony of the Gospels for intervening events: Luke 12:22-34; Deut. 8:11-20; Psa. 49:6-20; Psa. 52; I Tim. 6:1-21.

Lesson Links

This lesson follows the last very closely. Jesus was still in Perea. (For events between last lesson and this see *Harmony in Brethren Quarterly*.) Here in this country, removed from the prejudices of Jerusalem the multitudes called out by the seventy followed Jesus everywhere. Jesus had just been warning the people against the "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Then he taught them of God's love for us his children.

The Lesson Story

As he was thus talking of high and holy things to the people, a man in the audience failing to profit by Christ's gracious words, and thinking he might be able to use this great Teacher for his own advantage, asked Jesus to speak to his brother and bid him divide the inheritance with him.

Had the Man been Wronged?—We are not told whether this man had been treated wrongfully or not. But, probably his brother had mistreated him. But Jesus refused to lend himself to the settlement of a family quarrel incited by covetousness. This man's request showed a spirit which was altogether foreign to the spirit Jesus was teaching them they should have. Thus it is, that men's selfishness make discord in the finest sermons. Here was a man who had not even thought of the beauty of the life Jesus was preaching. He could think only of the inheritance of which his brother had robbed him. He was like many men to day, who will not work in the church because somebody therein has wronged them. Their attitude is as far from Christ's way as is that of those who did the wrong. Jesus taught forgiveness.

Christ's Refusal.—Jesus indignantly refused to be made a judge or divider in a case of selfishness. On the contrary he gave this man a warning which went to the bottom of the trouble. Said he, "Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness; for a man's life consists not in the abundance of things he possesses. When he has what he needs, why should he desire more? Besides a man's life is something greater than having enough to eat and wear." Why, will not this money-loving age learn that? Money and farms and riches cannot give us life. Only the way we use these things shows whether we have life or not.

The Rich Fool.—Then Jesus told a story to show the tendency of riches, the transitoriness of riches and the folly of covetousness. Said he, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he reasoned with himself, What shall I do, for I have no room to store my harvest." Notice, how the man calls all these gifts of God "mine." He evidently has forgotten that God has any share in their production. A too frequent spectacle! "This will I do: I will tear down my old barns and build greater one's: and there will I store all my corn and my goods." His care of riches and looking after his worldly affairs had made him forget God.

A Rich Fool's Conversation with His Soul.—Now, this man had a soul yet. It must have been a very shriveled, weak kind of a thing to which a man could talk as he did. That soul given him as the part of him which differentiated him from a hog, which linked him to God,—that soul he had so shut out from spiritual things that he could address it as follows: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." His soul had been so perverted that its whole interest was in laying up perishing "goods."

"Take thine ease,"—to his soul, this: "Eat,"—think of a man getting so low as to believe that his soul could eat! "Drink and be merry." Think of to what a depth a man must descend before he can thus honestly talk to the divine part of himself! That soul, given him to make him godlike, he had cramped and starved and whipped into such perverted ways that its whole joy was in being at ease, in eating and in drinking. And the search for riches had done it. And, hear it, ye, whose lives, whether you be rich or poor, are filled with the search for riches,—such is the sure result of the life many of you to-day are living. God may give you riches, but he will take away your soul's appetite for heaven and divine things. "And what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

But God Does Not Forget.—Altho, this man had forgotten God, God had not forgotten him. All thru those years God had by the law of compensation been giving him a soul which could eat, drink and be merry, for one which could fly, and worship and sing and be godlike.

And now in the midst of his folly and forgetfulness God's long-forgotten voice was heard in thunder tones by that miserable, distorted lucre-hungry soul, "Thou fool, this very night, thy soul, which thou hast driven down from its godlike throne to its slavish subservience to thy debauched body, is required of thee." O, what must have been the remorse which gnawed him, when that voice made him see things as God saw them. And, Jesus has said that the remorse and sorrow which shall be in the hearts of those to day who look at things from the world's standpoint rather than God's will be great,— "there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." You, who know you should serve Christ and are chaining down